

SHOPPINGHOUR



NO. 1

TO CHILL WITH THE WILL

WELCOME. OUR APPROACH, AS DEFINED BY THE DICTIONARY, IS:
 "WITHOUT DEFINITE AIM, PURPOSE, METHOD, OR ADHERENCE TO A PRIOR
 ARRANGEMENT; IN A HAPHAZARD WAY."

THE AROMA

a scent, an aroma, is released into the air and every individual that discovers it, whether intentionally or not, allows for it to enter and merge into her being. a fart, paradisiacally discharged from one individual, is permitted through the nostrils of another, blending with the oxygen that warrants her survival. in that very special moment of exchange, the two exist as one, united forever, by the fart: the vapour that was expelled, the gas that was passed, the wind that broke, the cheese that was cut or The One that was ripped. communication, in any manner expressed, or even farted, is what unites us.

CAN I HAVE A WORD IN PRIVATE?

Not once but twice in Chapter XXVII of his Essay Concerning Human Understanding (on personal identity), John Locke quotes with evident relish a line from I Corinthians on the Day of Judgement: "the great Day, wherein the Secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open".

Reading this, it occurred to me that the idea of an omniscient God is more than a little creepy. A God who knows exactly what I think and feel at any and every given moment - it's the ultimate invasion of privacy, an all-pervasive divine voyeurism. Some quake at the monumental solitude of a universe without God ("The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread", to use Pascal's phrase); I rather like my privacy. Locke's pet New Testament quote caught my eye because its vision of the eschatological showdown of humanity is one where God - not content with His own omniscience - makes sure everyone else gets to know our most intimate business as well. The day of reckoning is the day of exposure. It goes something like this:

The public realm becomes the only realm.
 In heaven nobody will need to keep secrets.
 Secrets imply guilt.
 Secrets compromise the pureness of being.
 Secrets are a fall from innocence.
 Innocence is transparency.

This denouement is the final triumph of the communal, the reversal of Heidegger's formula that the uniqueness of each individual lies in the fact that they must face their own death alone. To me, the demolition of privacy that is going on here strikes at one of the core experiences of subjectivity - namely interiority, the very possibility of a hidden, a closed off personal ambit that one can choose whether to reveal or to withhold. In the "secrets of all hearts" state of affairs the refusal to be laid bare, the hoarding of oneself, is a sign of culpability and imperfection - a wish to evade judgement.

From one perspective, the idea of God might be considered as a limit on human imagination and ambition. You do not discover for yourself; God reveals to you. God, as Creator, claims ultimate copyright on all your inventions. As perfection, God trumps all your ridiculously flawed human ideals and attempts at integrity. And as the terminus of all meaning, God has already written the end to every story. Where God ceases to be the arbiter of objective meaning, a free space opens up in which people acquire true authorship of the personal meaning(s) of their lives; privacy acquires frightening dimensions (something that existentialism reacted to as a vacuum, a profound loss, a crisis of meaning. Another way of seeing this is as a reclamation of inner freedom). In such a world, it is possible to keep a secret that will never be revealed.

Meanwhile, the eminently quotable Milan Kundera has described totalitarianism as an attitude where the will to homogeneity, the dissolution of difference, involves the decisive rejection of privacy: "Totalitarianism is... the age-old dream of a world where everybody lives in harmony, united by a single common will and faith, without secrets from one another. André Breton, too, dreamed of this paradise when he talked about the glass house? in which he longed to live..." Those social and political movements which demand that everyone conform to the same set of beliefs must eventually come to desire the obliteration of privacy, for the private moment is the last refuge of freedom of thought – freedom of being. The function of Orwell's Room 101 was to gain control over even one's most private hopes and fears, for to extend power in this absolute way means there is genuinely no possibility of escape or rebellion, even down to a silent, solitary gesture of the mind. This process begins when people lose the right to keep secrets. This is the human correlative of the omniscience of God.

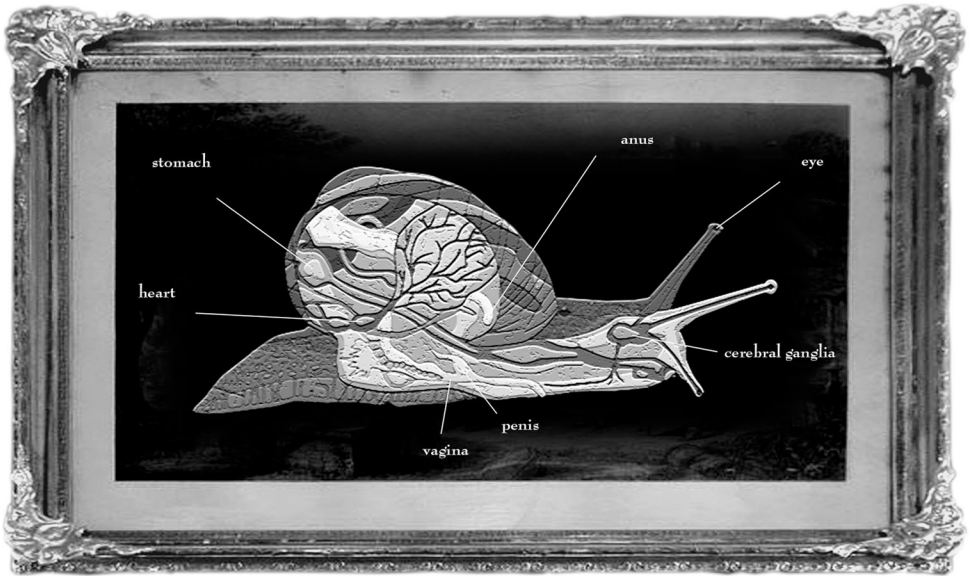
Elsewhere, Kundera describes our attitude to shit as a major obstacle to the 'categorical agreement with being'. If the world that we find ourselves in is acceptable and good, we should be able to do everything out in the open. (King Louis XIII used to hold court whilst on the privy; privy being a more apt word in our more squeamishly private times – meaning as it does both a lavatory and something especially secret). Sex... menstruation... bodily functions generally... What we choose to keep private can suggest shame, ambivalence, an inability to acknowledge certain realities – paradoxically, perhaps, it can also sometimes reveal what is most precious to us.

Of course, you can balk at all this fuss about privacy as arising from some bourgeois concern with privilege, as simply an adjunct to capitalist, individualist ideologies. If affluence can be measured by how much privacy you can afford, how much space you can bracket off from the rest of the world, it may only be an elite kind of selfhood that is enacted behind closed doors. As a society we seem to lean towards Heidegger rather than I Corinthians - death is the ultimate act of privacy; we draw a curtain of respect around it. In other times and cultures, death - like life - happens out in the open.

"I myself shall continue living in my glass house where you can always see who comes to call... where I sleep nights in a glass bed, under glass sheets, where who I am will sooner or later appear etched by a diamond" (from Nadja).

ASTRAEA AND DOMENICO

as I recapitulate the aforementioned philosophical blasphemies,
one cannot help but see vast shapes of indistinct sizes and surfaces
appear before one with the urgency of felt ultimacies,
swirling, it seems, with liquid smoothness and perpetual dynamics of articulation,
only to figure out as a sphere of mirrors, spinning around its own axes,
sending out indiscreet messages and potentially spurious hallelujahs.
and the sphere is no longer there...
swallowed, perhaps, by mouths of transterrestrial prodigality,
chewed like thick slices of tobacco, and digested within the endless bowels
of temporal and spatial wormholes.
but, alas, the sphere exits the anus of the universe with an ambition
that cannot be succumbed to any kind of colonialism.
it disperses into a torrent of drops made out of mirror, enfolding one
into insubstantial funhouses, reflecting the splendor of dying suns.
and one bathes in the rain of infinitesimal mirrors without restraints, diving into
postapocalyptic landscapes, undreamt meetings at subway doors, late-night farewells.
indiscreet messages in bottles...float indefinitely in the farthest stretches,
until they become stellified, engraved in the firmament as the gifts of petty gods
that make and remake themselves in order to shed some light upon their existence.



WHEN I CAREFULLY SEEK OUT, IN DEEPEST ANGUISH, SOME STRANGE ABSURDITY, AN EYE OPENS AT THE TOP, IN THE MIDDLE OF MY SKULL. THIS EYE OPENING UP ONTO THE SUN IN ALL ITS GLORY, TO CONTEMPLATE IT IN ITS NAKEDNESS, PRIVATELY, IS NOT THE WORK OF MY REASON: IT IS A CRY ESCAPING FROM ME. FOR AT THE MOMENT WHEN THE FLASH BLINDS ME I AM THE SPLINTERING BRILLIANCE OF A SHATTERED LIFE, AND THIS LIFE - AGONY AND VERTIGO - OPENING UP ONTO AN INFINITE VOID, BURSTS AND EXHAUSTS ITSELF ALL AT ONCE IN THIS VOID. GEORGES BATAILLE, L'EXPERIENCE INTERIEURE

AN EXERCISE HINTING AT THE FUTILITY OF PHILOSOPHY

PLEASE CHOOSE:

1. Order is an illusion. Order is what disjoins, organises, categorises and limits; often it is imposed. Order is sanity. Unity, on the other hand, is characterised by an organic, unfathomable, impulsive disorder. Unity is insanity.
2. Disorder is an illusion. Disorder is what disjoins, organises, categorises and limits; often it is imposed. Disorder is insanity. Unity, on the other hand, is characterised by an organic, unfathomable, impulsive order. Unity is sanity.
3. Order is an illusion. Order is what disjoins, organises, categorises and limits; often it is imposed. Order is insanity. Unity, on the other hand, is characterised by an organic, unfathomable, impulsive disorder. Unity is sanity.
4. Disorder is an illusion. Disorder is what disjoins, organises, categorises and limits; often it is imposed. Disorder is sanity. Unity, on the other hand, is characterised by an organic, unfathomable, impulsive order. Unity is insanity.

PHILOSOPHICAL WORD OF THE DAY: HAECCEITY

“The aspect of existence on which individuality depends; the hereness and nowness of reality. First coined by Duns Scotus, haecceity is that sense one gets of being in the present tense, the pure experience of a single moment in time”.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

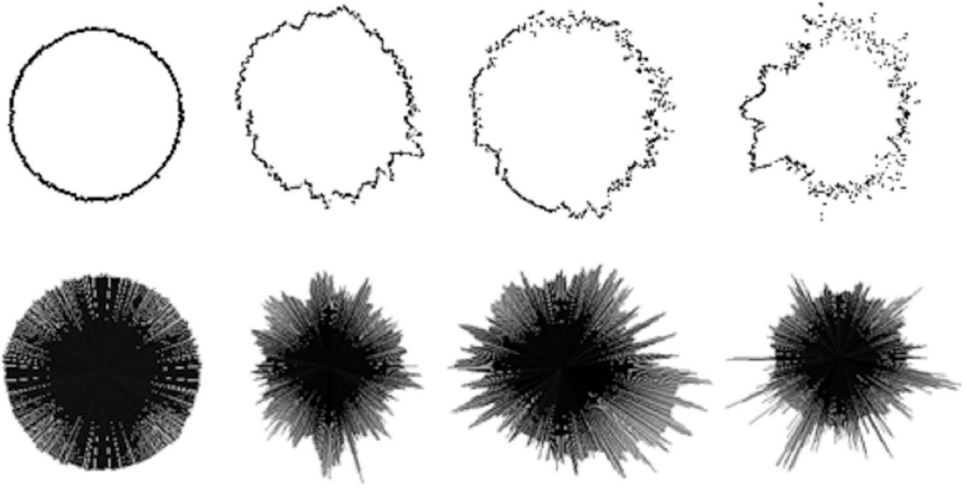
In her 1965 essay *On Style*, whilst talking about experiencing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, Susan Sontag makes the following statements:

“And the world is, ultimately, an aesthetic phenomenon. That is to say, the world (all there is) cannot, ultimately, be justified. Justification is an operation of the mind which can be performed only when we consider one part of the world in relation to another – not when we consider all there is”.

Compare this to Nietzsche's famous statement in *The Birth of Tragedy*: “for only as an aesthetic phenomenon are existence and the world justified to eternity”.

Presumably Sontag's echoing and subverting of this statement must be a knowing one, especially as she quotes directly from *The Birth of Tragedy* within two pages of the above remarks in *On Style*: “Art is not an imitation of nature but its metaphysical supplement, raised up beside it in order to overcome it”.

THE COSMIC ARTIST (INSPIRED BY AND DEDICATED TO THE KING OF POP)



The above diagrams are two visualizations from Windows Media Player. The first is entitled *Amoeba* and the second *Spike*. Visualizations are plug-ins that display splashes of colour and geometric shapes that change with the beat of the audio that is playing. (Windows Media Player Help)

A composed and monotone sound piece contains the visualization in form and sustains its initial formulation as a whole. However, as the sounds begin to vary in pitch and a melody or beat kicks in it begins to transform and fragment. In figure 1 it is shattered, fragments fly off it achieving momentary independence, and in figure 2 they excel, desperately struggling to reach out and break away.

The artist as cultural, political, spiritual or physical provocateur, iconoclast and revisionist, is faced with a battle of cosmic proportions. She has to utilize creativity, the act of excelling beyond a set of established norms, to shatter the territories which she is always already deeply embedded in and reach out into the unknown, into space. In doing so she provokes an awareness of these multilayered territories and momentarily disproves their convincing delusory existence. She reminds her people that these worlds exist simply to contain and sustain, to impose an order, a structure, which is not real as such, or even always necessary. She proclaims: "each and every fragment is an independent, free-thinking and free-willing consciousness!" And proves that there is a space beyond these territories, a space of equanimity and peace, from which one can placidly look back and evaluate the structures that govern and direct one's will.

Looking back from this far reaching point one might locate the only intrinsic reality that these territories share, the central core from which they originate. The layers are then, for the first time, seen as that which they truly are: reflections of that central energy. Consciousness, the reverberating sound itself, manifested from and represented as will, whether to simply survive, be happy or evolve, and the potential for it, is then recognised as that most sacred of all qualities.

Prior to taking such a leap the artist must sustain herself within these territories without losing recognition of her individual consciousness. She must be wary of being duped by the territorializing forces of the homogenising popular, forces which often direct their powers on reinforcing the illusionary reality of their territory. Whilst sustaining herself she must gather genuine

deterritorializing forces and plan her leap. To do so she must embrace danger and risk, even death. She must be prepared to launch forth, fearlessly, into an unknown realm, wherein she will stand in complete isolation, free from the many deceptively comfortable territories that she is so familiar to; with creativity as her only companion.

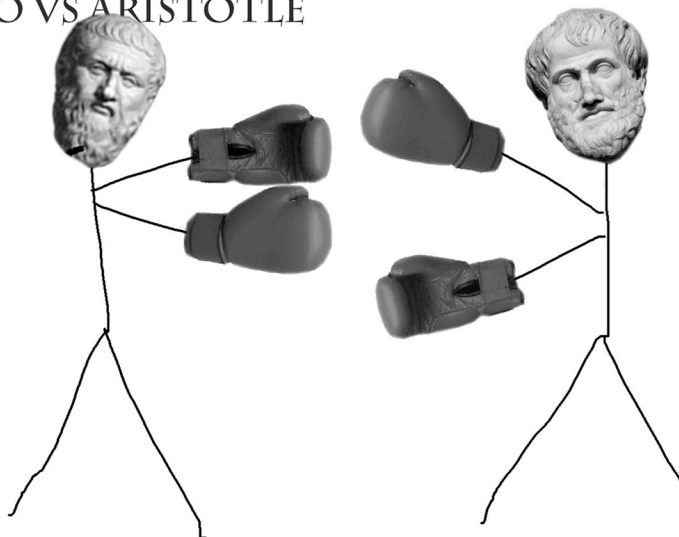
It is noticeable that however erratic the sounds played the fragments can only reach a certain specific predetermined limit and then withdraw back into their formation. Their leap can only be momentary; for the formation is a pre-programmed territory that will always abide to its laws, it is a species that will always be territorial. Each fragment is always already a member of it and must recognise that it will always be so.

The cosmic artist can only reach a certain predetermined limit. If she does achieve a successful creative leap it can only be momentary, for she will soon, unavoidably, recede back into the territory by the territorializing forces that define her; for it is her territory that, in the first place, permitted the leap.

Perhaps we are focusing too strongly on the visualizations. They are, after all, created to *represent* the sounds performed. But they are not the sounds themselves. Or are they? As long as the sounds are calm and collected, monotone, the visuals maintain their formation without it being evident that they are synchronized. However, as they begin to vary in sonority and the fragments begin dancing around it becomes more noticeable that they are, in fact, in sync. The further away a fragment flies the more strongly embedded it seems to be to the sound it represents. If a fragment succeeds a leap of cosmic proportions, then at that far off point, somehow, every sense of logic about the manner by which the formation functions to simply represent the sound or reflect the consciousness, begins to fail, to collapse, and the fragment transcends the limitations set by its 'programmed' nature, *becoming* the sound, and resonating everlastingly as a cosmic moment in time, a crack, a kairotic instant in the history and evolution of that territory towards uncovering the melody of consciousness.

Bibliography: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, chapter 'On the Refrain', *A Thousand Plateaus*

BATTLES OF THE GREAT PHILOSOPHERS 01: PLATO VS ARISTOTLE



IRONY

Monotheism can encumber the believer with a bowdlerized self-image. They might be held in an ongoing regard: the internal source of their self perception always separated out. Narrative arts too, in their way, by offering the audience the opportunity to escape through identification with another who is somehow framed, grant the usually voracious observer of the drama a chance to view themselves. Portraiture also, on canvas or film, in the close-up.

Being with another, or being awash in the world, are ways out of the self-regard to which, unfortunately, and as the success of monotheism attests, people can become, in a very ingrained way, addicted.

To step back into oneself fully is to gain a better perspective, to open out.

With significant irony this realization came to me, a long time ago now, after watching Dekalog 7 (Dir. Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1990), identifying with a self-possessed young man, shaken by meeting his daughter for the first time. The girl, stirred by a dilemma at the end of the film, is framed in the last shot, held a long while, as she can run after the train she watches no more. The train carries away her mother, whom she'd been raised to believe was her sister. Irony's prevalent meaning, linked in a mercurial way, is that of a double audience.

Such 'cosmic irony' alights on the viewing self, and the self viewed - a thought received doubly. An instance, not of a double audience for something said, but of a double self perceiving something occurring, one self fooled, the other not. The self viewed has its own ephemerality pointed out, made stark, for it to shrink back, leaving only oneself. Does the proper perception of truth, beauty, goodness uncover oneself too? Perhaps only in glimmers as long as the separation maintains. Remove it, and does the 'proper perception' come with ease?

It is bad when one thing becomes two. One should not look for anything else in the Way of the Samurai. It is the same for anything else that is called a Way. If one understands things in this manner, he should be able to hear about all Ways and be more and more in accord with his own.

(From the first chapter of 'The Book of the Samurai'.)

CONTRIBUTORS TO SHOPPINGHOUR NO. 1

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A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM OUR SPONSORS...



FRAGMENTS

A grey haze covers the neighbourhood, the city. Its morning, Saturday and I'm on the balcony swallowing phlegm. The electric kettle bubbles audibly from the kitchen. A cat's being raped a few blocks down; I hear her moan in pain with each stroke. I take a slow, deep breath. Its dust, the haze, not mist.

I smear three slices of toast with cream cheese, wash them down with coffee, have a cigarette. I crave something only I'm not sure what. I'm surprised at how suddenly and persistently the feeling manifests. I get bored so I read some.

I'm in a bar and its late, maybe early, I can't tell. I lift my head off the counter and take a look around. Place is more or less empty save for the bartender who's watching the TV suspended above the one end of a series of shelves. Its light gets refracted through glasses, bottles and ashtrays. Someone's set the contrast too high. There's also a thin guy with a reptilian face and water slicked hair at the other end of the bar leering at me. He's wearing a very well tailored suit. There's noise and I realise its coming from the bathrooms, not the TV. The bartender's looking at me now.

"What's going on in the back?" I ask.

"Lulu's putting out for cut rates tonight. You gonna pay for your drinks?"

"Sure." I pay him for my drinks.

"You want in?"

The man in the suit's getting up, walking very slowly, ambling towards me. I get up off my stool.

"No, I'm good."

I'm driving back home from the Green Monday picnic. Rogue cars brush by me, shining cauterized headlights. The drivers watch me and each other and wonder why people are out so late on such a day turned night. Some wear slicked noise suits and hold their crotches if they're driving automatics. In my neighbourhood, Sri Lankan women are walking pedigree dogs of rich owners living in the area. A silver family car floods me in beam light at a T-junction. I slow down, electric windows roll down, shaking yellow bubble worms reflected, a Turkish man with a trimmed moustache and sunglasses behind the wheel. He has a heavy accent and the white hairs glow in his gristle.

"Hello, you know where jails? You nigger?"

"No, I'm a local. Can't you see my pale skin?"

"Ah, you local, I thought you nigger. You know where jails?"

"You follow the road you're on and at the end, it will curve by itself towards the entrance of the jails."

He sticks a thick fat arm out the window and gives me the thumbs-up; he looks ahead of him, smears saliva across his flat meaty lips with his tongue and drives. A purple wolverine runs down the road, snarling and spraying spit. I clear the turn, reach home and park.

I'm in the back of a filthy white van being knocked around. I sense we're being chased. There are three of the four members of a drug gang in the back with me. They look Japanese and have Australian accents. I black out, come to for a brief moment, probably hours later and the ride has become somewhat smoother. One of them, a girl with two tied shocks of black hair is looking at me while she licks whipped cream off my erect dick; she's pulled my pants down to my ankles and clutches fiercely at the waistline. Two guys are fucking each other and snorting coke in the background. I come in the girl's creamy mouth of teeth and bubbles and my head falls back again.

Dogs bark in the distance. I close my eyes and see them standing in the soft mud, their fur unevenly cut and sticking out in tufts. I see them barking at their masters, farmers with pitchforks and rifles. I open my eyes and my sister appears before me, knee-high in mud. She's holding a small clear bag filled with white powder between her thumb and forefinger.

"Where've you been?" I demand.

"I talked to the guy and got the coke just like you told me to."

"Took you long enough. Let's move."

We run through the edible mud, thicker than honey that pulls on our shoes. We near the forest. The trees are sinking into the earth. I lose my sister in them when we enter. I call her name, start swearing. The dogs are nearer now. I stop calling so I don't give myself away. I find her on her back in a ditch, still awkwardly holding the bag between her fingers.

"What are you doing?" I hiss.

"I'm hiding, I was afraid they'd get me."

"If you stay here, they'll definitely get you. Now get up and move. And give me the fucking coke!"

She does and I take her hand. We start running and I know we'll lose them. A Komodo dragon waddles along our two pairs of footprints in our wake.

Refracted light shines through her reptilian hair. She's sitting by an old-fashioned full-length oval mirror. I check her pulse and she smiles at me, never taking her eyes off me. I smell atoms melting around me and she blinks. I examine her ears, mouth, I take her temperature.

"You're feverish."

"Well that's understandable, my skin's been oversensitive today. What do you suggest?"

"The inflammations behind your ears suggest Lever Fever which is purely psychosomatic."

"Are you saying I'm causing this?"

"That's my prognosis. Have you been anxious or unsatisfied with anything lately?" She doesn't look at the floor; there's only a small pause suggesting she's been wanting to tell me or anybody the answer to my question. She never takes her eyes off me.

"I had a baby about a year ago. I've been living with my husband ever since. We've been together for two years."

"What's the problem? Does he mistreat you?"

"Oh no, he's the nicest man ever, supportive and kind."

"And the baby?"

"The baby...is wonderful. Its such hard work and I go crazy sometimes but I love him so much."

"You're still not telling me the problem."

"I know. Its just that I've been wanting to tell someone who would listen and now that I have my chance, I'm nervous."

I look away and produce a small brown bottle and hypodermic needle from my bag. I prepare a shot. She never takes her eyes off me.

"I'm young and I don't like getting too attached to things. I love my baby but I don't want to get too attached to it."

"Love involves attachment more often than not in my experience."

"But you can control it. Control yourself. Can't you?"

"I believe it involves balance. If you were to make a point of controlling attachment, you could very well become attached to control, don't you think?"

"What's in the needle, doc?"

"Something for the fever, something for the nerves." She extends her arm, palm up towards me and I give her the shot.

"Mm, that's nice, fast too."

"Its new, very effective. It can only do so much for you though. What's in your head is what you take with you wherever you go."

"You're sweet, doc."

"My patients pay me well. I might as well give them their money's worth."

"You don't have to be their shrink, you don't have to listen to my problems but you do. You're a good man."

"Kind of you to say so. May I ask you something more?"

"Yes."

"Could your anxiety be stemmed to the possibility that despite having a healthy baby and caring husband, you always thought that you'd be able to meet new people, go out at night, travel constantly and cultivate all your interests without fatigue or strain?"

She looks at me like a little girl, the fast-beating heart of a grown woman beating inside her. She doesn't blink. If it weren't for the shot, I imagine she'd start crying.

"I don't want to upset you. All I'm saying is that in this life, as important as it is to live in the here and now, one must understand that the days that lapse and die are never returned and with them dies, piece by piece, our concept of time and the physical world. I like to think that, if one were to be as calm and aware as possible, one would realise that this process is preparing us for our physical deaths and if we allowed ourselves to shed any regret on the premise of what we have or haven't done in our lives as well as regret of what we may never do, we will allow the days to die without our laments, without shame and embrace our own physical mortality. What I'm trying to say is, live the life you have my dear, for your little one. There are many days ahead of you and I'm sure you'll find a fair share in which your person will be blissfully unattached, unhinged and uncaring."

Gray haze golems grip the foundations of the city. Translucent phlegm bubbles at the foot of King Komodo's rotted jade throne. Maria hears alleyway rape moans and thick slaps of flesh on streets coated in counter dust and rising vapours. Reptilian oil oozes out of her pores, slides along her jaw, down her neck, breasts and into her navel; minute cauterized headlight crystals form, the smallest breath-sharp cuts allowing glow saliva to coat the intestines and thicken the blood. Lulu cells spread through her organism in noise suits and beam light stilettos, hustling lymph glands, teasing ovaries, asking capillaries, "You want to fuck my pussy? You want me to suck you off you sexy motherfucker?" King Komodo wraps His tail around the dais and unleashes a ripped tongue-slick roar. I lock the white van, I touch my gristle, my pale skin; I'm wearing a very well-tailored black suit. Maria reaches the curves and walks toward the jails. The Purple Wolverine drug gang trek through the surrounding hills with pitchforks and rifles, through sinking trees, through edible mud to their cream nest where Ni Hai rests in ebbs of gristle and saliva light. King Komodo wraps His magnetic scepter with thick folds of reptilian flesh-grip and Ni Hai screams in convulsions of dust rape orgasm. I reach the perimeter of the jails, I reach Maria seated by a full-length oval mirror, the fragments of small brown bottles at her feet. She never takes her eyes off me. I tell her she's had her fair share and I pull her up, revealing her swollen belly. Control levers embrace cog-tooth mechanisms and the jail bells sound off, sealing anxieties in cage symmetry. I lean over her skin-bound seed and drink warm sweet milk from her, tied shocks of her spinal chord pulsing currents, the fast-beating heart of a grown woman and dribble of phosphorescent sweat rolling off and against erogenous inflammations King Komodo withdraws a forked tongue from; Maria clutches my waistline fiercely. Golden parasitic tendrils pierce blissful neural shocks behind my ears. Lulu wolf whistles, coating the intestines, glow of subsonic ejaculation rings clear and the smell of atoms melting surrounds us.

(*Fragments*, by Baret Yacoubian, was published in numerous literary magazines and is part of the collection '*Dreams, Visions, and Fragments*'. His novel, *Avalo*, was published in 2005.)

LOOK OUT FOR SHOPPINGHOUR NO. 2:
WHY WILL WHEN YOU CAN CHILL?

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OR RESPOND PLEASE CONTACT US AT:

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